Department of State TELEGRAM

XR SOC 12-1 VIETS

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EXCISE

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ACTION EA-19

INFO NEA-15 GPM-03 SC-01 RSC-01 USIA-12 H-02 NSC-10 NSAE-00 L-03
INR-07 P-04 CIA-04 DOD-01 SP-02 SS-35 SAL-01 SAH-02 AID-30
RSR-01 /157 W

R 061220Z AUG 67 ZFF KATHMANDU
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4127
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3698
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 121
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2099

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2471

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

KATHMANDU FOR BUNKER

1. NORMALLY COHESIVE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN VIET NAM HAS NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO ARRIVE AT A UNIFIED POSITION ON THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. NO OFFICIAL GUIDANCE FROM CATHOLIC LEADERSHIP HAS SO FAR BEEN PROVIDED TO CATHOLIC FAITHFUL.

2. CATHOLIC PREFERENCES FOR VARIOUS CANDIDATES ARE LIMITED IN NUMBER BUT VARIOUS FACTORS HAVE SO FAR PREVENTED CATHOLICS FROM MAKING A DECISION TO BACK ANY ONE CANDIDATE:

A) GENERAL SPLIT AMONG CATHOLIC RANK AND FILE BETWEEN THOSE WHO

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FAVOR THIEU-KY AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT TRAN VAN HUONG;

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Izumi DATE 10/7/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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B. INSTRUCTIONS FROM ARCHBISHOP BINH TO BISHOPS AND PRIESTS THAT CHURCH SHOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS.

C. GENERAL FEELING AMONG CATHOLIC LEADERS THAT THEY SHOULD AVOID GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF THE EXISTENCE OF A MONOLITHIC CATHOLIC POLITICAL FORCE.

3. CONSENSUS OF CATHOLIC LEADERS IS THAT ALTHOUGH RANK AND FILE CATHOLICS ARE FAIRLY WELL DIVIDED BETWEEN SUPPORT FOR THIEU-KY AND HUONG, THE THIEU-KY SLATE HAS AN EDGE AND IS GROWING STRONGER. [redacted] b-1 ed

[redacted] HOWEVER, THAT MORE CATHOLICS WOULD HAVE CAST VOTES FOR KY IF HE HAD RUN BY HIMSELF THAN WILL VOTE FOR THIEU-KY, DESPITE THIEU'S CATHOLICISM. [redacted] THAT THIEU-KY TICKET "ACCEPTABLE" PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF ITS STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST POSITION AND ITS CONTROL OVER THE MILITARY.

4. GREATER SOLIDARITY FORCES (GSF), [redacted] HAS NOT YET TAKEN OFFICIAL POSITION IN FAVOR OF ANY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

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AS NOTED SAIGON 426, GSF CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD THROWN ITS SUPPORT TO KY BEFORE THIEU-KY MERGER BUT GSF AS A WHOLE DID NOT OFFICIALLY COME OUT FOR KY AT ITS NATIONAL CONGRESS JUNE 20-25. ACCORDING [redacted] CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND GREATER PORTION OF GSF MEMBERSHIP FAVOR "THIEU-KY", THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAS NOT OPTED PUBLICLY FOR THIEU-KY, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THE THIEU SLATE HAS FAILED TO GIVE ANY ASSURANCES OF SUPPORT FOR GSF SENATE SLATE (LIST #8). [redacted] IN PAST THAT KY HAD GIVEN SUCH ASSURANCES TO HIM PRIOR TO JUNE 30 IN RETURN FOR ACTIVE GSF SUPPORT.

5. REGARDING SENATE RACE, [redacted] THAT ALTHOUGH ARCHBISHOP HAS ATTEMPTED TO DISCOURAGE BISHOPS AND PRIESTS FROM SUPPORTING CANDIDATES, EVERYONE RECOGNIZES THAT CLERGY WILL BE ASKED BY

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FAITHFUL FOR ADVICE.

FOUR SO-CALLED CATHOLIC SENATE LISTS:

A) LIST HEADED BY DIRECTORATE MEMBER NGUYEN VAN HUYEN;
B) GSP LIST HEADED BY HUYNH;
C) LIST HEADED BY EX-GENERAL HUYNH VAN CAO; AND
D) LIST COMPOSED PRIMARILY OF MILITARY DOCTORS HEADED BY VU NGOC HOAN.

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ASKED ABOUT LIST HEADED BY DIEM ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN TRAN VAN LAM, [redacted] TOLD CAN LAO DO NOT SMELL GOOD TO CATHOLICS AND WILL GET LITTLE SUPPORT FROM ANY QUARTER.

6. [redacted] TOLD EMBOFF THAT CATHOLICS WILL BE INFORMED WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF PREFERRED CANDIDATES. HE DID NOT REVEAL HIS OWN PREFERENCE, HOWEVER.

[redacted] HAS BEEN IN SOME CONTACT WITH AN QUANG BUDDHISTS WHO HE SAID HAVE BEEN MEETING RECENTLY AT AN QUANG PAGODA AND AT BUDDHIST YOUTH CENTER. HE SAID THAT RUMORS ABOUT POSSIBLE BOYCOTT OF ELECTION BY BUDDHISTS ARE NOT TRUE AND THAT THEY ARE IN PROCESS OF COMING TO DECISION AS TO WHOM TO SUPPORT.

7. NEWSPAPERS DURING PAST FEW DAYS HAVE ANNOUNCED FORMATION BY FATHER QUINH OF "POPULAR STRUGGLE MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY". ACCORDING TO [redacted] AN ATTEMPT BY QUYNH TO REVITALIZE THE FRONT OF ALL RELIGIONS WITH A NEW NAME. [redacted] THAT QUYNH WILL NOT GET VERY FAR WITH THE "NEW" GROUP, PRIMARILY BECAUSE HIS ASSOCIATES IN FRONT EXCEPT

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THE AN QUANG MILITANTS ARE ALREADY INVOLVED WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

8. COMMENT: BOTH TRIEU-KY AND HUONG APPEAR TO BE ASSURED OF A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THE CATHOLIC VOTE. GROUP SUPPORTING HUONG APPEARS TO BE MORE ACTIVE AND ENTHUSIASTIC. NEVERTHELESS, CATHOLICS FOR TRIEU-KY ARE PROBABLY MORE NUMEROUS THAN HUONG GROUP PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF DESIRE OF MOST CATHOLICS TO BE ON WINNING SIDE. IF TRIEU-KY WINS GVN LEADERS (WHO CONSIDER SUCH VICTORY ALMOST FORESONE CONCLUSION) PROBABLY FORESEE FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF PARTY AS REGIME INCLUDING A SHARE OF THE SPOILS.

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